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CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
EXPEDIENCY OF REVISING
THE
LITURGY AND ARTICLES
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND:

IN WHICH

Notice is taken of the Objections to that Measure,
urged in Two late Pamphlets,

BY

A CONSISTENT PROTESTANT.

Rich^d Wilson. D.D.

THE SECOND EDITION.

*Integra nobis est judicandi potestas, neque ut omnia, quæ
præscripta et quasi imperata sunt defendamus, necessitate
ullâ cogimur.* Cic.

*With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of
you, or of man's judgment—He that judgeth me is the
Lord.* St. Paul, Ep. Cor.

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THOUGHTS, &c.

THE subject on which I mean to hazard a few thoughts has lately been brought before the publick by a Layman, it is said, of high rank, in a Pamphlet, intitled, "Hints to the new Affociation." In opposition to the principle of this publication two pamphlets have recently appeared, one intitled, "A Vindication of the Doctrines and Liturgy of the Church of England;" the other, "An Apology for the Liturgy and Clergy of the Church of England." I flatter myself I should feel no difficulty in making a minute

and satisfactory answer to both these Pamphlets ; but there are some things in both of them, which I dare not trust myself with answering circumstantially, lest I should be thereby betrayed into the adoption of petulant and imperious diction, into the use of rude and offensive sentiment : I will endeavor, without referring to them, to reply to every observation of consequence in either of them.

I am happy in the outset in knowing, that the minds of men in general, and, especially, that the minds of those men who constitute the legislature of this country, are too liberal and enlarged to be startled by that miserable excuse for supineness and inattention to matters of great concernment, by that shallow pretence for not doing that which for other, but not ostensible, reasons a man wishes not to be done ; by that stale and contemptible cant—the danger of innovation.—The retrenching the privileges of Parliament was an innovation ;

novation; the changing the mode of determining contested elections was an innovation; the freeing dissenting ministers from the necessity of subscribing to our articles was an innovation; the relaxing the laws against Popery was an innovation—these and other innovations, equally useful to the state, have been made in the reign of *George the Third*; and if another innovation—a Review of the Liturgy and Articles of the Church of England—should be added to the number, it would neither bring discredit to the character, nor disturbance to the Government, of the Monarch; both of which are as dear to those who contend for the expediency of the measure, as they can possibly be to those who oppose it.

I am far from thinking, with some, that the multitude, in general, is fond of novelty and innovation. On the contrary, I am persuaded, that the man who attacks ancient establishments of any sort, but especially ancient Church

Establiſhments, even of the moſt opprobrious and immoral kind, is much more likely to have the multitude againſt him than with him. By an inexplicable mechanism, I had almoſt ſaid in human nature, every man becomes fond of what he has been uſed to ; the habit of thinking and reaſoning on any ſubject is changed with great difficulty ; and the change is ſeldom attempted to be made, becauſe the very attempt is accompanied with an humiliating and uneaſy apprehenſion of our having been in the wrong. Few men have moderation enough even to examine, with candour and care, opinions ſubverſive of their own.—*Plerique* (I quote not Latin for the ſake of ſhewing my learning, but of expreſſing in elegant language my meaning.) *Plerique*, ſays Cicero, *errare malunt, eamque ſententiam quam adamaverunt pugnaciſſimè defendere, quam ſine pertinacia quid conſantiſſimè dicatur exquirere.*

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We all know how long it was before *Christianity* triumphed effectually over *Paganism*. The multitude, for many years after the Gospel had been preached amongst them, adhered, in every city of the Roman Empire, to their idols, and following, with blind obedience, the admonitions of their priests to suffer no innovation, maintained the superstition of their ancestors. At so late a period as in the year 384, when the Emperors too were become Christians, we find the senate of Rome sending a deputation to them at Constantinople, and petitioning for the restoration of the altar of Victory, the lands of the Priests, and the college of the Vestals. *Symmachus*, Prefect of Rome, and High Priest of Paganism, was at the head of this deputation : he artfully personified *Rome*, and introduced the sacred city, pleading in the petition the cause of Paganism, in a manner wholly similar, in substance, to that in which the enemies of reform

of Church Establishments have addressed themselves to their civil rulers, in every age and country of the world: "O ye best of princes, the fathers of your country, revere my great age to which these rites of Religion have brought me, and let me still follow the ancient observances. These rites drove Hannibal from my walls, and the Gauls from the capital. And have I lived so long to be corrected in old age? Let me know what this new institution is. Sure I am, that to reclaim old age is an unseasonable and dishonourable undertaking."

We all know how long it was before *Protestantism* effectually triumphed over *Popery*; before the reform of the doctrine and worship of the Church proposed by *Wickliffe* was established in this country. His followers, indeed, were numerous, and amongst them were persons of great eminence in the state; for so absurd were the doctrines, so superstitious the rites of the Estab-
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blished Church, so oppressive the tyranny of the Pope, so great the power, so exorbitant the wealth, and so profligate the manners of the Clergy, that his innovations, which were levelled at the correction of these enormities, were acceptable to persons of all ranks; yet the bulk of the nation still continued their attachment to the Church Establishment. " Though Wickliffe and his followers detected many of the errors, and exposed many of the superstitious practices of the Church, the Clergy obstinately refused to abandon any of those errors or relinquish any of those superstitions, and persecuted with unrelenting cruelty all who attempted the smallest reformation. The declamers of the Lollards against the excessive power and riches, and scandalous lives of the Priests, inflamed their rage against them, and made them reject all their other opinions without examination; and the Laity in general were still too ignorant, or too indifferent, to form

form opinions for themselves on subjects of that kind."

A thousand other instances might have been produced in proof of the reluctance with which men admit innovations in the Religion to which they have been accustomed; but these may be sufficient, for rendering questionable that opinion which represents the multitude as fond of innovation. They may be sufficient too, if impartially considered, for suggesting a little doubt, for inspiring a little diffidence into the minds of those who, in our days, so zealously and so proudly oppose every step towards a reformation, treating, with rancorous bigotry and insolent temerity, those who with modesty and sincerity presume to *hint* its expediency. We may all think ourselves happy in being born in enlightened times; for which of us can say that, had he lived in the days of Symmachus or of Wickliffe, he would not have concurred with the senate of Rome in petitioning for
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the continuance of Paganism, or with the Clergy of England in maintaining the establishment of Popery? Rectitude of intention alone will not justify a man's conduct, though *invincible* prejudices may. Strong persuasion, and bold asseveration that nothing is wrong, are but simple modes of proving every thing to be right in a Church. When *Arundel*, Archbishop of York, compelled, by the terror of the stake and faggot, the recanting Lollards to swear, "that they would worship images with praying and offering unto them, in the worship of the Saints that they be made after,"—he had, I question not, rectitude of intention, and strong persuasion that every thing was right in the Church, to plead in excuse for his violence; yet one cannot but wish, that his conscience instead of being erroneous had been just; nay, even that it had been but so much as scrupulous, that he had hesitated a little, before he made men swear to obey Holy Church in the worship

worship of images. We have not now any *Arundels* to fear; Holy Church hath no images to worship; but whether every thing is so right and ought *to be kept so tight* in her worship and doctrine, that nothing can be amended, or ought to be attempted, is what no affirmations which I have heard, no arguments which I have hitherto read, have induced me to assent to.

Whatever truth then there may be in the proposition which asserts, that the multitude is fond of innovation (and I do not deny that there is some truth in it, for we know that the multitude can on some occasions see what is right), I think that the proposition, which asserts that the Priesthood is averse from Reformation, is far more generally true.—Who was it that crucified the Saviour of the world for attempting to reform the Religion of his country? The Jewish Priesthood.—Who was it that drowned the altars of their idols with the blood of Christians, for attempting to abolish

lish Paganism? The Pagan Priesthood. —Who was it that persecuted to flames and death those who, in the time of Wickliffe and his followers, laboured to reform the errors of Popery? The Popish Priesthood.—Who was it, and who is it, that, both in England and Ireland, since the Reformation——but I check my hand, being unwilling to reflect upon the dead, or to exasperate the living, whom, would to God! I could conciliate (I say not to any opinion of mine, for that might be construed an arrogant expectation, but) to a charitable temper of mind towards those who differ from them, and to a dispassionate consideration of the subjects concerning which they differ!

But perhaps it will be argued, that the conduct of the several Priesthoods I have mentioned or alluded to, was right; that there is of necessity an alliance between the State and the Church in every country; and that this alliance is of such a nature, as to render it the
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duty of the Ministers of the Church to oppose every innovation in the Established Religion till the State shall think fit to propose it. I am mistaken if a principle of this sort has not gotten possession of the minds of some men, from whom better principles might have been expected; and though it is impossible for this principle to be true, without its being also true that it is a man's duty to support every error and impiety which the enthusiasm, the superstition, the vices, or the follies of mankind, have introduced and established in the various Religions of the world; yet I will employ a little time in examining the foundation on which it is built.

It is not every one who has formed an adequate idea of what is meant by the terms—Established Religion—and I know not whether the meaning I annex to them will be admitted as the proper one: I, however, understand by them—A Religion, the doctrines and
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rites of which are taught and administered by men, who are paid for their service by the State, or Civil Magistrate. —And by the Civil Magistrate, I understand a person or persons executing the will of the majority of the members composing any civil society. The fund from which the State pays the Ministers of the Established Religion may be either a general fund, to which all the members of the community are equally obliged to contribute their share, or it may be a fund belonging exclusively to the State, in which individuals have no property, and towards which they contribute nothing. To the first sort of fund may be referred the general tax which is raised upon the whole community for the maintenance of the Ministers of Religion in different States both of Europe and America; to the second may be referred tithes. For, though I ground not the claim of the Church Ministers to tithes on any thing but the law of the land, yet I
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can not consider tithes as a tax raised on individuals. The Church (I had rather say, the State for the purpose of maintaining the Church) hath as old and as equitable a title to the tithable property, if I may so express myself, of all the lands subject to the payment of tithes, as the owners of the lands have to the lands themselves. This public fund, of whatever sort it may be, must be absolutely in the disposal of the Magistrate; he may either expend it in paying the Ministers of one Religion, or of more than one; and, according to his determination in this point, one Religion, or more than one, will be established by him. We have been so accustomed to see, not only in this country, but in other parts of Europe, the Magistrate supporting exclusively one denomination of Christians, and enacting penal laws against all who would not conform to it, that our prejudices will not readily suffer us to admit, either the practicability, or the
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expediency, perhaps not the innocence, of his supporting more than one. Whether it would be most productive of the public good for the Magistrate to pay the teachers of one Religion, or of more than one, is a great political question, concerning which men of the deepest judgement will be divided; and, I humbly think, it does not admit a positive decision either way. The different circumstances, under which different societies may be placed at the same time, or the changes that may arise at different times in the same society, may make it a part of political wisdom to adopt a diversity of procedure on this important point. A supposition or two will explain my meaning; and, that I may not give offence by coming too near England or Ireland, I will take the liberty of making France and America the subjects of conjecture.

The French *National Assembly* will be immortalized for the wisdom and the liberality of their proceedings; and,

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amongst other instances of their magnanimity, meriting the approbation, and calling for the imitation, of other nations, are those resolutions in which they have decreed—that no man is to be molested on account of his religious opinions—and that all citizens shall be equally eligible to public offices.—These are such great encouragements, that the time, I apprehend, will soon arrive, when Protestants of every denomination will become numerous in all the provinces of France, and the mischief attending the revocation of the edict of Nantz be done away. It is no improbable supposition, that in half a century a majority of the French nation will be Protestants. And who will say, when such an event shall have taken place, that it would not be highly *expedient* for the French government to secure its prosperity, by shewing an equal attention to all its subjects; by abandoning all prepossession in favour of one mode of Religion, and paying
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from the public purse not only Catholic, but Protestant teachers of Christianity?

That this is a *practicable* system can scarcely be questioned by those who consider what has happened in America. Long before our disputes with that country, it was enacted in the assemblies of the provinces of *Massachusetts Bay*, and *Connecticut*, that all members of the Church of England should be exempted from the payment of taxes, for the support of *any* teacher of Religion except one of their own persuasion. In these provinces then two Religions, or, more properly, two modes of the Protestant Religion were equally established—that of the Independents, of which the main body of the people consisted, and that of the members of the Church of England. But this it will be urged proves nothing, inasmuch as the favour granted to the members of the Church of England proceeded probably from the interference of the government of England.—

Granting this, without enquiring whether it ought in fact to be granted or not, still the *practicability* of the State's supporting more sects than one is proved. Another observation however may be made, which will shew, not only the practicability, but, after long Experience, the *expediency* of the measure, in the judgement of the people of Massachusetts, when they were no longer subjects of Great Britain. In their declaration of rights made in 1780, it is said "all monies paid by the subject to the support of public worship, and of the teachers aforesaid, shall, if he require it, be uniformly applied to the support of the public teacher or teachers of his own religious denomination, provided there be any, on whose instructions he attends; otherwise it may be paid towards the support of the teacher or teachers of the parish or precinct in which the said monies are raised. And every denomination of Christians demeaning themselves peaceably,

peaceably, and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law; and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law." But this establishing of different sects may be looked upon as a singular experiment which has not been sufficiently tried (though it has had a long tryal in America), as quite a novel attempt in the annals of mankind, and wholly unsuited to any form of government except a republick. This objection has no validity in any part of it? for the experiment has been tried not only in a republick, but in an absolute monarchy; not only by a new, but by an old, and, as some think, by the wisest nation upon earth. "It might, perhaps (says the Abbé Raynal), be an advantageous circumstance, if in all countries, as we are assured it is in China, the administration were attached to no doctrine, to no sect, nor to any particular mode of religious worship."

To what purpose this digression from the subject?—It is no digression whatever from the point in debate. The question is, whether it be the duty of the teachers of established religions to see that no innovations be made in them. —Now the possibility of different sects being equally established by the magistrate shews that it is possible, at least, for a teacher of an established Religion to be under no such obligation, from the relation in which he stands to the magistrate. The magistrate may think it both practicable and expedient, nay he may become still more liberal in his political principles, and think it both reasonable and just to establish different sects of Religion ; and, if he does this, it will follow as an easy consequence, that he will think the public welfare little concerned in such changes of doctrines or ceremonies as the several sects shall from time to time be disposed to make in their respective persuasions. The opinion, that the safety
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of the civil constitution is inseparably connected with the exclusive support of a particular denomination of Christians being removed, by the establishment which he has given to more denominations than one, he will contemplate with tranquillity the introduction, and forward with liberality the discussion, of such sentiments, as lead to reform the abuses in practice, or the errors in principle, which may be thought to subsist in any of them. And on the supposition of the magistrates having established only one Religion, as Episcopacy in England, Presbytery in Scotland, Popery in France, I wish it to be considered, whether it be consistent with his character as a magistrate, much more with his character as a Christian magistrate, to require of his teachers such a rigid adherence to his doctrines as precludes all possibility of alteration. Can it be thought credible, that the majority of a society of Christians would affect such a dominion over the faith of

their fellows, would make such bold and indecent pretensions to infallibility, would be so little conscious of the weakness of human understanding, and so blind to future improvements, as to suppose that no time or circumstance, no increase of learning, no change of manners and sentiments in their posterity, could justify the teachers of the Established Religion in proposing any deviation from it? Whatever may be the conduct of other countries, I trust that the ruling Powers, both in the State and in the Church of this country, will not only permit the free discussion of theological subjects, but think themselves obliged to all those who, with moderation and good sense, shall attempt to point out what they take to be errors in the doctrine, or failures in the constitution and discipline of the Church of England. It may be that she has no errors to be corrected, no failures to be reformed; but it is certain, that she cannot be displeased with those

those who in godly sincerity enquire into these points, without abandoning the principle which actuated her first reformers, and liberated our forefathers and ourselves from the tyranny of the Church of Rome.

There have been *Statesmen* who considered an Established Church as a mere instrument of government, ten thousand men in black coats to be as serviceable to the State, as the same number in red coats, and who regarded the form of doctrine of the one with as much indifference as the form of discipline in the other, requiring an exact obedience from both. There have been *Churchmen*, who considered the connexion between the Kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world to be so strong, that they thought it their indispensable duty to defend and extend the Kingdom of Christ by those Spiritual arms, and by those only, which were put into their hands by the State in which they lived. Men with these prin-

principles must always be averse from reformation. The Statesman, be he a Pagan or a Mahometan, a Catholic or a Protestant, an Episcopalian or a Dissenter, may think all Religions equally efficacious in answering the end for which he protects any, and find in himself little inducement to encourage promoters of innovation, lest they should disturb the tranquillity of the government, and, as was said of the Apostles, turn the world upside down; and the Churchman, knowing it to be his interest, and, perhaps, believing it to be his duty, may do his utmost to support that system of Religion which the State has hired him to sustain.

In such circumstances it may not be improper for individuals, whose opinions accord not with the principles of either such Statesmen, or of such Churchmen, and whose consciences urge them to attempt the amendment of what they think amiss, to propose their sentiments with great plainness and moderation

ration, but with that firmness, at the same time, which becomes the subjects of a free State. They should certainly abstain, not only from all contumelious and disrespectful language towards the establishment itself, but from reviling those who stand forth in its defence. Nor should they be provoked to a contrary conduct by the example of their opponents. Illiberal insinuations, imperious language, arrogant pretensions to superior probity or understanding, disdainful and injurious representations of the designs, talents, arguments, and characters of those who think not with us, are modes of controversy equally abhorrent from that dignity of character which becomes a Gentleman, and from that forbearance and charity of temper which adorn a Christian. Such weapons of offence, even in the mighty hands of Warburton, were odious ; but, in those of his feeble imitators, they are both odious and contemptible.

It may be thought, that the revival of the Liturgy and Doctrines of the Established

blished Church would in no wise contribute to the reformation of our manners ; and those may be *sneer'd* at, who say that it would. Sneer and Contempt apart, as unworthy of the subject, let us consider the matter fairly.—Whatever tends to render the higher ranks of society more sincere believers in the truth of the Christian Religion, than many of them are thought to be at present, will contribute to the amendment of *their* manners ; and the influence of *their* amended manners will extend itself through the other classes of the community. Now to say, that there is nothing in our Liturgy, which, if removed, would tend to render the higher classes of the community, more sincere Believers in Christianity, is to take the matter for granted, it is a mere *gratis dictum*, and I think not a true *dictum*. Without here either admitting or denying the truth of the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity, I ask whether, in fact, the maintaining the belief of that

Doctrine

Doctrines to be necessary to Salvation has or has not greatly contributed to the increase of Deism, both in this country and in others? If any one believes that it has not, then the removal of that Doctrine would, in his judgement, be of no use in rendering Men more sincere Believers in Christianity; but if it has, and my opinion is most decided that it has, then there is solid sense, at least, in the reasoning of those who say, that a removal of the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity from our Liturgy would tend and, I will say, greatly tend to the melioration of our manners.—I beg to be rightly understood; I do not here affirm that these Doctrines ought to be removed; it may be, as some men insinuate, that they cannot be removed without subverting the principles of the Christian faith; and on that supposition they certainly ought not to be removed; it may be (for unless a man is so very unreasonable, as to contend for the impossibility of any thing

thing being true, except what he and his friends assent to) it may be that they are unscriptural Doctrines; and, on that supposition, those who believe them to be so, and wish to see them expunged from our Liturgy, are right in their reasoning—that a reformation of our Liturgy would contribute to a reformation of manners.

I will produce two quotations, from two different authors, not with a view of either defending or finding fault with the justness of their observations, but simply to shew, that the opinion which I have taken the liberty to advance—That the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity has contributed to the increase of Deism; is not advanced merely to support an argument, but on solid grounds. *Whitby*, whose piety and learning are above all question, in his *Last Thoughts* writes thus “This Doctrine, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are of one and the same individual and numerical essence, seems to
burlesque

burlesque the Holy Scriptures, or give them an uncouth and absurd sense, from the beginning of the Gospel to the end of the Epistles." Now, if the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity burlesques and renders absurd the Holy Scriptures from the beginning of the Gospel to the end of the Epistles, I know not how it can be expected, that any man of common sense, who looks no farther than to his Liturgy for his faith, and there are many such, can escape the infection of infidelity. I take the other quotation from a Book published in the course of the last year, intitled, "Observations upon the Liturgy, with a Proposal for its Reform, &c. by a Layman of the Church of England, late an Under Secretary of State." I have thought it reasonable to produce the opinion of this Gentleman, in preference to that of many others which might have been produced, not only out of the respect which is due to his good intentions; but from think-

ing, that the testimony of a man who professes himself a friend to the Established Religion, and who from his situation must have mixed much with the world, would, as to the point for which I quote it, be of as much importance as that of any other man. " The Athanasian Creed is represented and defended as so literally copied from the Evangelists and Apostles, that whosoever refuses his assent to every tittle of it is considered as a disbeliever of Christ's Divinity, and a denier of the three distinctions in the Divine Nature in which we are commanded to be baptized; and, what is still more to be lamented, many who go to that Creed to learn Christianity, as conceiving it to be nothing but what all Christians must and do believe, come away shocked or confounded, and in compliment to their own reason, or to preserve it, enlist under the banners of Deism; inso-much, that I really believe that Creed has made more Deists than all the writings

Writings of all the oppugners of Christianity, since it was first unfortunately adopted in our Liturgy." Enough I think on this head, let us turn to another.

To call upon those who, out of a sincere regard to the public good, have *binted* the propriety of a Reformation of our Liturgy, for a full detail of all particulars which they may think exceptionable in it, would not be a reasonable demand, even if the subject was a new one. A man may be thoroughly convinced of the existence of an evil, and yet not be fully aware of the extent and malignity of it in all its parts; or supposing him perfectly acquainted with the whole subject, he may be kept back, out of a regard to peace and decency, and diffidence in his own ability, from displaying to the world all his knowledge, on a subject of delicacy and importance; or he may refrain from doing it, out of deference to those whose more immediate duty he may

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think it is, to bring forward his hints, by the authority annexed to their station, and by the sanctity appertaining to their function. These might be sufficient reasons for a man's contenting himself with throwing out general hints, even if the subject of them had never before attracted the attention of the world; but to demand particulars on this subject, must either proceed from an incompetent knowledge in the person who makes the demand; or from his reliance on the ignorance of those before whom it is made. The Letter by a Country Curate, first published in a respectable Miscellany in 1737, afterwards redeemed *from oblivion* by appearing in a Book "On the Expediency and Necessity of revising and improving the Public Liturgy" in 1749, and lately brought forward again by the Author of the "Hints," is neither the first nor the most important publication, though certainly valuable as far as it goes, on a reform of our Liturgy.

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The Author of this Letter is supposed to have been the late Reverend David Hughes, Fellow of Queen's College in Cambridge; I have heard that he was a man of great modesty, liberality, and knowledge in the Scriptures, and that his memory is much revered in that University.

It is generally known that a Commission was issued in the Year 1689, empowering several Bishops, and other Churchmen, to prepare such alterations of the Liturgy, &c. as they should judge reasonable. All the proceedings under that Commission are not known (the Books containing the account of them having never been published); but some of them are; I will mention a few, from Birche's Life of Tillotson; not only with a view of satisfying, in some measure, the demands of those who call for particulars, but to oppose the authority of the names of Stillingfleet, Patrick, Tillotson, Kidder, Tenison, &c. to that of those who have formerly

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thought,

thought, or who do now think, that no alteration whatever ought to take place, being well aware of the truth of that saying of *Hilary* to *St. Austin*, which is quoted by Hooker: “Your most religious wisdom knoweth how great
 “the Number in the Church of God
 “is, whom the very Authority of Men’s
 “Names doth keep in that opinion
 “which they hold already, or draw into
 “that which they have not before held.”

It was determined by the Commissioners in 1689—That the Chanting of divine service in Cathedral Churches should be laid aside, that the whole may be rendered intelligible to the common people—That besides the Psalms being read in their course as before, some proper and devout ones be selected for Sundays—That the Apocryphal Lessons, and those of the Old Testament which are too natural, be thrown out, and others appointed in their stead—That if any do in conscience scruple the use of the Cross in
 Baptism,

Baptism, it may be omitted—That if any refuse to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper kneeling, it may be administered to them in their pews—That the absolution in Morning and Evening Prayer may be read by a Deacon, and those words, *and remission* be put out as not being intelligible—That these words in the *Te Deum*, "thine honourable, true, and only Son," be thus turned, "thine only begotten Son;" honourable being only a civil term and no where used *in Sacris*—That the *Benedicite* shall be changed into the 128th Psalm, and other Psalms likewise appointed for the *Benedictus* and *Nunc dimittis*—That all high titles or appellations of the King, Queen, &c. shall be left out of the Prayers, such as *most illustrious, religious, mighty, &c.* and only the word *Sovereign* retained for the King and Queen—That those words in the Prayer for the King, *Grant that he may vanquish, and overcome all his Enemies*, as of too large an Extent, if the King engages in an unjust War,

shall be turned thus, “ prosper all his
 “ righteous undertakings against thy
 “ Enemies.”

That the Prayer which begins, *O God, whose nature and property*, shall be thrown out, as full of strange and impertinent expressions.

About the Athanasian Creed, they came at last to this conclusion; that, lest the wholly rejecting it should by *unreasonable* persons be imputed to them as Socinianism, a rubric shall be made, setting forth, or declaring the curses denounced therein not to be restrained to every particular article, but intended against those that deny the substance of the Christian Religion. These are some of the alterations of the Liturgy which were proposed by the Commissioners in 1689: what others were agreed to is best known to those who have seen the original books; but, whether the representing even these as trifling and insignificant, and consisting of mere verbal errors, is a fair representation, I leave to the
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Reader's own candid judgement, without presuming to direct it. It appears, from the history of the times, that this reform was rejected by the influence of the Jacobites, who wanted to bring back King James; and of the *High Churchmen, who declared against all alterations whatever.* The particulars then thought necessary to be changed, and other particulars since thought necessary, might, it is presumed, when properly prepared, be submitted to the deliberation and decision of Parliament at this time, with a good prospect of success: I say of Parliament, for laymen are as much interested in the truth of Christianity as churchmen are; and, in this enlightened age, are as capable of seeing what is revealed in their Bible; and I say at this time, for the piety of the Monarch and his regard for religion are unquestioned; and I have not heard that he has ever expressed a dislike to the undertaking. We have now

no *Jacobitical* faction to be afraid of; and if there are churchmen who *declare against any alteration whatever*, I think their number is, comparatively speaking, small. It is not in my power to comprehend the reason of this stiffness; it cannot surely proceed from that principle which influenced Archbishop *Whitgift*, when, on the *Commons* having passed a bill for permitting marriage to be celebrated at any time of the year, he complained to Queen Elizabeth, asserting that the bill contained matter which tended to the *slander of the Church, as having hitherto maintained an error*; for at this time of day we are too liberal, it is to be hoped, to conceive that any human constitution can be slandered for not having attained absolute perfection. If it should proceed from (as appears to me) a groundless apprehension of the constitution of the Church being endangered by innovation, I would beg leave to recommend to the *most serious consideration*

consideration of those who are of this opinion, a remark of Lord Bacon, whose manner is to express in a sentence what a common man would write a book about,—“ a froward retention of custom “ is as *turbulent* a thing as an innovation ;”—and let me add, though I cannot expect equal credit to be given to the observation, *that more constitutions, civil and ecclesiastical, have been overturned by what is called firmness in their rulers, than by well-timed concessions to popular requisitions.*—If more particulars are required than what were taken into consideration by the Commissioners in 1689, the reader may turn to a book published in 1746, and a second edition in 1750, entitled “ Free and Candid Disquisitions relating “ to the Church of England, and the “ Means of advancing Religion therein.” If he still is not satisfied, but accuses the friends to reform of *dealing in generals*, let him look into Dr. Clarke’s Improved Common Prayer Book ; let him

him study a pamphlet, which will be remembered to the honour of its author, when the concerns of humanity will affect him no more, published in 1774, under the title of "Queries relating to the Book of Common Prayer, &c. with proposed Amendments;" let him lastly peruse, "Observations on the Liturgy, &c." which I have before referred to. No man who knows any thing of the works here mentioned, and the catalogue might have been much enlarged, can be at a loss for the particulars of that reform, which has been, in the course of the last hundred years, so often called for by men of candour, integrity, and learning: and no one, who considers the matter without passion or prejudice, will, I am persuaded, speak of it as a *frivolous object* which these men have in view, or suppose that they did not *understand* before they, it cannot with justice be said, *rebuked*, but *binted* their dislike.

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But, as there is an argument, it may be called a palmary one, which some men have always at hand to justify their clamours against an amendment of our Liturgy and Articles, it may be of use to consider it with some attention. The argument in brief is this : The knowledge of Religion does not admit a progression similar to that which takes place in other subjects of human investigation ; learning may indeed be properly employed in elucidating the difficulties of the Sacred Writings, but with the Doctrines themselves, as they are delivered in Scripture, human learning has no concern.—Now, if I may be allowed the use of so strong a word, I *maintain* that this argument is not true ; and I maintain, moreover, that the principle on which it is founded, is a principle better suited to the ignorance and tyranny of the Church of Rome, than to the learning and liberality of the Church of England. I maintain,
that

that the argument is not true, inasmuch as the clear elucidation of a difficulty in the Sacred Writings is, in many important instances, the establishment of a doctrine. An expression apparently obscure or ambiguous may contain a *doctrinal* point; and when human learning has cleared up the obscurity, or removed the ambiguity, the doctrine will be ascertained, and not before: for a dubious and ambiguous doctrine is no doctrine. So that human learning may shew us *that* to be a doctrine which, in our ignorance, we did not apprehend to be one. Or it may shew us the reverse; it may shew us, that in deference to the authority of Popes and Councils, or in obedience to our own misapprehension of the sense of particular passages, we have taken that to be a doctrine of Scripture which was nothing more than a fancy in our own brain, or in that of other men. It is one of the doctrines of the New Testament

tament—*That Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; and I presume it would be no improper object for the exercise of human learning to enquire, in what sense Jesus Christ is said to be the Son of God; and if it should be found, that he is called the Son of God in more senses than one, there is no absurdity in thinking, that all the learned men in Christendom might be usefully employed in clearly and indubitably ascertaining what was the sense in which the eunuch used the expression, when he said—*I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*; for on that profession he was baptized. An elucidation of this difficulty would rid the world of *many foolish and unlearned questions*; and teach mankind what was, and what was not, that doctrine concerning the Person of Christ, without a belief of which a man must perish everlastingly.

So much has been written on the Trinity, on Free Will, on Original Sin,
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on Grace, on Predestination, and other supposed fundamental Doctrines of our Holy Religion, that a man's life-time would not be sufficient for enabling him to peruse all that has been published on any one of these subjects either before the Reformation, or since.—What are we to learn from hence? Not a lesson of despondence, as if learning had no concern with the doctrines of the New Testament; but a lesson of diffidence and moderation; a lesson of backwardness in saying that our Church alone has *the faith which was once delivered to the saints*; a lesson of forbearance, in permitting those to minister amongst us who cannot, in every thing, assent to our decision of such abstruse points. That *there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.—That as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.—That as the Father hath life in himself, so*
hath

bath be given to the Son to have life in himself.—That the eleven disciples were commanded to *teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* These and other Truths, of high importance, must of necessity be assented to by all, being expressed in Scripture language; and, in fact, no sect of Christians ever denied any of them. But does it follow from this general assent, that human learning has no concern with Scripture - Doctrines? Would to God that learned men had ever thought so, and would think so now! Then should we have been freed from learned Creeds, learned Confessions of Faith, learned Articles of Religion.—If a summary of Religion had been thought useful in the Church of Christ, and I deny not its utility, it would have been expressed in the words of Scripture, and, every man being left at liberty to interpret these words for himself

himself according to the ability which God had given him, peace and charity would have been preserved. But this moderation has never yet taken place amongst Christians. All assent to the truth of doctrines expressed in Scripture Language ; but different Sects interpret the same words in different senses, draw from them different conclusions, build on them different superstructures, and think uncharitably of one another on account of their different opinions. All allow that there is no appeal from the Bible ; every Athanasian, Arian, Socinian, every Heretick of every age has been ready to say, with Chillingworth, “ Propose me any thing out of the “ Bible, and require whether I believe “ it or no ; and seem it never so incom- “ prehensible to human reason, I will “ subscribe it with hand and heart ; as “ knowing no demonstration can be “ stronger than this, God hath said so, “ therefore it is true.” But every man
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of sense hath been ready to say also with Locke, when any thing hath been proposed to him out of the Bible, "It is the
 " business of reason to judge of the
 " signification of the words wherein it is
 " delivered."

I think it has been of singular advantage to the cause of Christianity, that the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, that the reality of the miracles mentioned in them, that the completion of the prophecies of the Old Testament, that the inspiration of the Apostles, that the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, that the redemption of mankind through his blood, that all the great principles of Christian Faith, have been questioned by men of learning and ingenuity ; for after all the subductions of facts, authorities, probabilities, Doctrines have been made, which, from the exertions of great talents and great inclination to disparage the Christian system, could be made, still there

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remains somewhat of our common Faith in which all agree, and that somewhat is, in my apprehension, a circumstance of such ineffable importance, that I will never refuse the right hand of Christian fellowship to him who acknowledges its truth, never think or speak of him with disrespect, or with true Pharisaical pride esteem myself to be more orthodox, more acceptable to my Maker and Redeemer, than he is; and that somewhat is this:—"Eternal Life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ"—In vain will any man attempt to lessen in me my charity towards others, by telling me that this is but one of many truths contained in the Scripture, in which they agree with me: it may be so; God grant that we may all understand other truths as clearly as we understand this, and then there will be no disagreement amongst any of us. In vain will he attempt to puzzle my understanding with curious questions

questions concerning the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son; with doubtful disputations concerning the infinite Justice of the Supreme Being, requiring infinite satisfaction for the sins of a finite being, and estimating the atrocity of guilt by the greatness of the Being against whom offence is committed, rather than by the imbecillity of the being who commits it; with metaphysical speculations concerning the impulsive principle which determined God to give this gift to mankind at all, or through another.— Though I may understand little or nothing of these points, and of points such as these; and though it be certain that the bulk of Christians, wherever the Gospel is preached, must be wholly ignorant of them, yet all may press forward *in one hope of their calling*, all may be assured that, if they obey the Gospel, they will attain eternal life; for after all the merit which may be

supposed to attend confessions of our faith, yet *they* only are true believers in Christ who obey his commandments : what he himself said to the Jews, who believed on him, may be extended to all, *if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*

I do not mean to insinuate that there is no merit in confessions of faith ; or that learning is misemployed in extracting articles of faith from the Doctrines of the Scriptures ; quite the contrary. The more critically one part of Scripture is compared with another, and the more accurately the language in which it is written is understood, the purer will our faith be. It is not learning, with respect to Doctrines, which should be laid aside ; but it is that self-sufficiency of intellect, which prompts a man to impose on others his sense of a Doctrine as the only true sense, which ought to be discarded.

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To allow any one age to prescribe in Religion a mode of faith and worship for all succeeding ages, is to give way to that tyrannical assumption of power, which the Church of Rome claimed over the world, and ought never to be so much as mentioned amongst Protestants. I have great respect for the names of Cranmer, Hooker, Jewel, Chillingworth ; but to assert that every thing was so properly settled by them, that we ought not to deviate from them in any thing, is to use that slavish argument *ad verecundiam*, which the Church of Rome might have used, and which she did use in her most corrupted state. The enemies of Religious Establishments have not scrupled to say, that an attachment to system, a pretension to infallibility, an affectation of dominion over conscience, were not the peculiar marks of any particular Establishment, but general characteristics appertaining to all. And I profess I cannot listen to the opinion, which would compel Pro-

testants of all future ages to submit their understandings to the decisions of Cranmer and Ridley, of Parker and Grindal, and other Reformers of Religion, and Compilers of Liturgies, without astonishment and concern. These men, it is readily allowed, did much; but have Locke, and Clarke, and Hoadly, and Taylor, done nothing? When at the Council of Trent the Church of Rome said—*ad coercenda petulantia ingenia decernit (Synodus) ut nemo suæ prudentiæ innixus in rebus fidei et morum ad ædificationem doctrinæ pertinentium, sacram scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens, et contra Sensum quem tenuit, et tenet Sancta Mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctarum, aut etiam contra unanimum sensum Patrum, ipsam sacram Scripturam interpretari audeat*, what did the Church of Rome then say more, than what is now said by certain Members of the Church
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of England? The meaning of their language is this—Let no one presume to use his own ability in expounding Scripture contrary to the sense of the Established Church, and the unanimous consent (though such unanimity never existed) of those learned Fathers who have gone before us; every thing is settled, nothing can be altered for the better, Religion is not a progressive science, and they who think it to be so are *petulantia ingenia*, and must be coerced.

Systems in Theology have as much obstructed the progress of Revealed Truth, as Systems in Philosophy have done that of Natural Truth; and it will require as much application of genius, industry, and learning, to free the Christian world from the dominion of corrupted Doctrine, as it did to free the philosophic world from the dominion of Aristotle. So that,

Though Religion be not intended,
For nothing else but to be mended,

Yet Councils, and Synods, and Conventions, and Assemblies of Churchmen, have used so much wood, hay, stubble, in erecting, altering, and repairing Religious Establishments, that Wickliffe and Luther were almost at a loss to discover Religion itself: instead of the foundation of *Apostles* and *Prophets*, they met with that of Councils and Churches; instead of the *Chief Corner Stone Jesus Christ*, they every where met with *Anti-christ*, who had usurped his place. In plain language, Christianity has been so corrupted, that it will be a work of ages to restore it to its original purity; and Dr. Cudworth had reason on his side, when he doubted whether the truth of the Christian Religion was more apparent in having prevailed against its enemies, or in not having been smothered by the frauds and forgeries of its friends.—But it is time to advert for a moment to the Athanasian Creed.

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I have heard of the blasphemy of heresy in denying the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity; and I have heard of the blasphemy of orthodoxy in defending it. In the use of such expressions, every one must be supposed to deliver only his own sense of things: and this diversity of opinion may be easily tolerated, if every man will but treat the opinion of his neighbour with that respect and moderation which he wishes to be given to his own; and abstain from, what he would resent as an indignity if offered to himself, imposing his sense of things on other men. Let no one rashly, and injuriously, conclude, that he who dislikes the Athanasian Creed, and wishes to see it expunged from our Liturgy, does thereby shew his disbelief of the Doctrine of a Trinity; he may admit the Doctrine of a Trinity, without admitting the Doctrine of the Athanasian Trinity; nay he may even admit the Doctrine of the Athanasian Trinity, and yet reject
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the Creed for its uncharitableness. The opinions of Divines who have admitted a Trinity have been infinitely various : “ Did Athanasius (says a deep inquirer into this subject) deny the Trinity because he differed from Origen? or Cyril, because he differed from Athanasius? or Petavius, because he differed from Cyril? or Clarke, Pearson, How, Wallis, South, Bennet, Burnet, Sherlock, &c. because they differed from one another? or Waterland, because he formed a system different from all that went before him? Surely by no means; every one had a right to understand the Doctrine as he thought was most agreeable to Scripture, but none of them to impose his opinion on other men.” I have introduced this quotation to abate the apprehensions of those who might think, that, in parting with the Athanasian Creed, they must of necessity give up every idea of a Trinity; they will part with nothing more than what every

Church of Christ, whether situated in the *East* or in the *West*, ought, when it was first offered to them, to have rejected as a bold invasion of their Christian Liberty, as a direct infringement of the Christian Law of Charity.

A Man (nobody now certainly knows who he was, or when he lived) of like passions, prejudices, and infirmities with the rest of his species, has had the presumption to declare, that everlasting punishment will be the lot of all those who do not believe a Doctrine, and his exposition of that Doctrine, which, if revealed at all in Scripture, is confessedly above human comprehension, and incapable of explanation. It is trifling to say that the damnatory clauses *are not parts of the Creed, and declare nothing more than the opinion of the composer*, for they extend from the beginning to the end of the Creed, and denounce damnation against all who do not believe every part of it; and it is
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evident that the Commissioners in 1689 understood them to do so, or they would never have proposed that “ a “ *Rubric* should be made, declaring the “ curses denounced in the Creed *not to* “ *be restrained to every particular Arti-* “ *cle*, but intended against those who “ deny the substance of the Christian “ Religion in general.” The Reader will do me injustice, if he thinks that I am in this place objecting to the Doctrine of the Trinity on any ground; and he will do me much greater injustice, if he thinks that I am objecting to it, on the ground of my inability to comprehend it. I know full well my inability to comprehend either the natural or moral attributes of the Deity; the mode of my own existence; the operation of any natural Cause whatever; to derive any objection to the Trinity from such a principle; nor do I believe that the incomprehensibility of the Doctrine ever hindered a man
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of sense from embracing it: all at least whom I have conversed with have uniformly argued—We know the distinct provinces of Faith and Reason; we know that God will never require us to believe any thing that is *contrary* to Reason; and we are ready to believe any thing that is *above* our Reason, if it can be shewn to come from him: we do not object to the Doctrine of Trinity because it is above our Reason, and we can not comprehend it; but we object to it, because we can not find that it is either literally contained in any passage of Holy Writ, or can by sound criticism be deduced from it.

Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. Shew me, thou that judgest another

ther man's servant so harshly, thou that boldly sayest without doubt he shall perish everlastingly, shew me in what part of the Bible men are commanded to *worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity*—the sanction is dreadful, the Law should be plain—produce the passage itself, and presume not by inference and argumentation, by metaphysical notions, scholastic distinctions, and unscriptural phraseology, to damn without doubt all men, for not believing as thou believest. I know that the divine displeasure is, in many places, denounced against those who reject the Gospel, when it has been offered to them; but I deny that it is in any one place denounced against those, who do not *worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance*. Without tiring my Reader by shewing the Irrelevancy, if I may be allowed the expression, of most of those passages which

which are usually produced from Scripture, in justification of the damnatory clauses of this Creed, I will single out one, and that by far the strongest which can be met with ; but I will not content myself, *as is too often done*, with quoting the latter part of the passage only. Jesus when he was about finally to leave his Disciples said to them—*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*—Without stopping in this place, to inquire critically into the meaning of the word *damned* as it is here used, but admitting, what some men will not grant, that it has a reference to a future state, what is the whole passage, when taken as it ought to be together, to the purpose for which it is produced ? Damnation is here denounced against those who do not believe the *Gospel*, but it is not denounced against those who do not believe

believe the Creed of St. Athanasius. But the Doctrine of the Gospel, you will rejoin, is exactly the same as the Doctrine of the Creed of St. Athanasius. —So *you* are pleased to say—but *I* have a right to demand how you *know* it to be the same; the term Trinity occurs not at all, the term Substance occurs not in the sense in which it is here used, in the whole New Testament; and the other phrases in which the different parts of the Creed are expressed are not Scripture phrases; the utmost that you can say, or that the Compiler of the Creed himself (whether it was Vigilius *Tapsensis*, as he is commonly called, or any other Person) could have said, is, that you *believe* it to be the same. It may be that your belief is right; it may be, that it is otherwise; this is not the time for examining whether it be right or wrong; I say nothing on that subject; but I must remind you, of what you ought never to have forgotten

gotten for a moment, that there are and have ever been thousands, and tens of thousands of men, who have resolutely contended, and do now contend, rightly or otherwise I here enquire not, that your belief is an absolute error; that the Creed of St. Athanasius is not the same thing as the Gospel; that myriads of Jews and Gentiles were baptized and put, they trust, into a state of salvation before ever the name of Athanasius was heard of in the world; that the Church of England herself baptizes infants and *adults* in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and declares them to be thereby made heirs of everlasting salvation on their professing a belief of the *Apostles' Creed*; that in doing this, she clearly shews, either that she does not believe the Creed of Athanasius to be necessary to salvation, for she declares Persons to be in a state of salvation without their profession of it; or, that she thinks it

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is in nothing different from the Apostles' Creed; and, if it be in nothing different from the Apostles' Creed, the introduction of it into the Liturgy, whenever it was done, was useless; and the retention of it is *the receiving him that is weak in the faith to doubtful disputations; it is putting a stumbling block, an occasion to fall, in our brother's way.*

Gracious God! whence is it that men are so little conscious of the imperfection of human knowledge in all sciences; of the utter impotency of human reason in whatever respects Deity; of the fallibility of human judgement in every thing; that they have so little humility as men; so little charity as Christians; as not to blush at their erecting their interpretation of Scripture into an idol, which all men must either worship, or perish *without doubt everlastingly!* That there are several Gospel truths in the Creed of St. Athanasius is not denied; but it is argued, though every particular of the Creed
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could be proved from Scripture to the satisfaction of every Christian in the world, except one, that all the Christians in the world would err against Gospel Charity, in adjudging, without any doubt, that *one* to *everlasting* damnation, for not believing as they believe.

I meddle not with the Doctrine of the Creed; the meaning of the terms *Consubstantiality* and *Personality*, as applied even to objects of our senses, is not clearly comprehended by one man in a thousand: Mr. Locke's opinion that abstract ideas constitute the sorts of substances, is somewhat more intelligible than the scholastic Doctrine of substantial forms; and yet different men would not perhaps soon agree, in what the substance of man differed from that of brute. But when these terms are applied to the Supreme Being; when Christ is said to be consubstantial with us by reason of his humanity, and consubstantial with God by reason

of his Deity (ὁμοῦσις τῷ πατρὶ κατὰ τὴν θεοτῆτα, καὶ ὁμοῦσις ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωποτῆτα), all my ideas, abstract and others, are entirely lost; and though on that account the propositions respecting such Consubstantiality are not to be rejected, if God hath said that they are true; yet a man may humbly wish, and he ought not to be esteemed factious and turbulent for expressing his wish, to submit his reason to the very words of Revelation, rather than to terms of man's invention.

I enter not into the question, when or by whom this Creed was composed. *Cave*, as quoted by Dr. *Clarke*, says, that it was never cited till about the year 800, above 400 years after the death of Athanasius; nor was received in the Church till so very late as about the year 1000: But though it could be proved that this *inestimable* treasure, as it has been called, was given to the Church as long before the age of Athanasius,

nasius, as it was probably given after it, still must I be of opinion, that the Church of Christ ought never to have received it. There may be inveteracy of error, as well as antiquity of truth; and he who can say nothing for his own opinions but that they are old, or against those of his opponents but that they are new, seems to me to say nothing to the purpose on either side. I will speak freely. Was I compelled to receive a Creed of *human* composition, I would more willingly, in these enlightened times, receive one from such men as Locke, Clark, or Tillotson, than from either Athanasius or Arius, or even from hundreds of contentious or political Bishops, assembled in solemn Council at *Nice*, *Antioch*, or *Ariminum*.

After this declaration, the Reader will not expect, that I should labour to adorn my page, or to display my learning (no difficult matter, I assure

him, in subjects of this kind) by a long string of quotations from the Fathers, in support of the Doctrine of the Athanasian Creed, or in opposition to it. There is the less necessity for my doing this, inasmuch as it has been frequently done by others; for though all the ancient authorities have not probably been produced on either side, which might be produced; yet few of much importance have escaped the researches of Petavius, Bull, Clarke, Whiston, Whitby, Waterland, and more modern writers on the Trinity. And there is no necessity at all for its being done either by me or any body else, if we may credit the judgement of the modest and impartial Whitby, he having, without any reserve, declared it to be his opinion, and supported his declaration by great learning, "that the controversies concerning the Trinity can not be certainly settled by the writings of the Fathers, by Councils, or Catholic tradition."

tradition." So that if a Controversialist should become another *Peter Lombard* in collecting the *sentences* of the Fathers, or another *Duns Scotus* in twisting them to his purpose, he would not, in the opinion of competent judges, be able to establish, (perhaps it may be added, not to refute, so loosely do the Fathers often express themselves,) the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity. The Doctrine, if it can be established, must be established as all other Doctrines ought to be, on the authority of Scripture. And in having recourse to Scripture on this point, I can not but admire that so much learning has been expended by one party in proving, and by the other in disproving, the genuineness of the famous text in the first Epistle of St. John. May I be permitted humbly to state my opinion—That the text, if genuine, can never prove the Truth of the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity, to the satisfaction of those

who think that Doctrine not to be proved in other parts of Scripture: and, on the other hand, that the text, if not genuine, will not enable the impugners of that Doctrine to get rid of the other arguments from Scripture, by which it may be maintained; for, it appears from Whiston's Life of Clarke, that not only Newton, and Bentley, and Clarke, gave up the text as not genuine, but that the most learned defender of the Trinity, Waterland himself, thought it was spurious. Mr. *Travis's* labours, on the genuineness of this text, are highly meritorious; and the labours of *Wolfius* in his *Cura Philologica*, published at Basil in 1741, are highly meritorious also; but to say that the separate or united labours of these gentlemen have left no room for *future doubt*, or *that the text now rests on the surest basis of authority and proof*, is affirming what many excellent critics will not admit to be true, and what,

if true, would not settle the point of Doctrine respecting a Trinity.

It has been said, and with an air of triumph, which the strictest accuracy, and the most indisputable veracity of the saying, would scarcely justify, "that the Book of Common Prayer, which has lately been adopted by the Episcopal Church in America, is in all *material* points the same with ours; and indeed, excepting a few alterations, not one of them impugning any article of Faith, an exact copy of our own Ritual." In a book of Common Prayer, published in 1786 at Philadelphia, and re-published last year in London, I find many variations from our Liturgy; I will first take notice of some, which, though they may be spoken of as not material, will by many be thought so; and then mention others, which all will acknowledge to be important.

The wish of the *Country Curate* with respect to Sponsors is accomplished, for
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by the American Liturgy—*Parents shall be admitted as Sponsors, if it be desired,* and the Sign of the Cross may be omitted. The objection of the *Country Curate* to the prayer in the Burial Service, beginning with, *Almighty God, with whom do live, &c.* as being neither agreeable to Reason or Scripture, has been attended to; for in the American Liturgy there is no such prayer. In the same service the phrase—*take unto himself the soul of our dear Brother,* is changed into, *take out of this world—* The phrase, *in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life,* and *as our hope is this our Brother doth,* are both left out. In the article intituled, *Of Faith in the Holy Trinity,* I cannot find any thing answering to—*in Unity of this Godhead there be three Persons of one Substance.* In the article of *Original Sin,* I cannot find—*therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.* I
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can find nothing answering to our 13th article, in which works done before justification are said to *have the nature of sin* : and the article respecting *Predestination* is greatly altered. But I study brevity ; and will turn from these and similar points, surely not immaterial ones, to others which have been looked upon as of great moment. I will instance in four particulars. In the Apostle's Creed the words, "He descended into Hell" are omitted—The Athanasian Creed is omitted—The Nicene Creed is omitted—The absolution of the sick is omitted, and a Prayer from the Communion Service is introduced in its stead. These are some of the alterations of our Liturgy, which the Episcopal Church in America thought fit to propose ; most of which they have adopted ; and all of which, I question not, they would have adopted, had they been left to the free and impartial exertion of their own judgement ; and
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how far such a Liturgy can be looked upon as almost an exact copy of our Ritual, let the candid inquirer judge.

Whether I am, or am not, justified in thinking, that the American Episcopalian Church would have adopted all the alterations, which appear in the Common Prayer Book printed at Philadelphia in 1786, if they had been permitted to follow their own judgement, the Reader must determine from the following statement of facts, which I have extracted from the journals of the American Convention, appointed to frame an Ecclesiastical Constitution, and prepare a Liturgy, published in a book before quoted, by *a late Under Secretary of State*.

The Clerical and Lay Deputies of the several States of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South Carolina, consisting of forty-two persons, assembled in Convention at Philadelphia, and held several meetings

ings from the 27th of September, to the 7th of October, 1785. In these meetings a Committee, consisting of seven Clerical, and of seven Lay Deputies, was appointed to consider of, and report such alterations in the Liturgy as should render it consistent with the American Revolution, and such further alterations in the Liturgy as it might be adviseable for the Convention to recommend to the consideration of the Church there represented: the same Committee was appointed to prepare a draft of an Ecclesiastical Constitution, for the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America; and also to prepare and report a plan for obtaining the consecration of Bishops, together with an address to the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, for that purpose. All this was performed by the Committee, and reported to the Convention, and the book of Common-Prayer, which I have mentioned, was recom-

recommended by the Convention to the consideration of the Church by them represented.—It does not appear that any objection whatever was made to this reformed Liturgy by the Episcopalian Church in America, and that it was in fact used by that Church for some time is therefore to be presumed.—It seemed good to the Bishops of England, before they consecrated any American Bishops, to recommend, shall it be said, or to require, that in the American Common-Prayer Book—the Apostles Creed should be restored to its integrity; and that a place should be given in it to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, even though the use of them should be left discretionary.—This recommendation, or requisition, was taken into consideration by a Convention of five States (there being no Deputies from Virginia or Maryland) assembled at Wilmington in the State of Delaware, on the 11th of October, 1786, consisting of twenty persons.

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On the question being put, whether the words, "He descended into Hell" should be restored in the Apostles' Creed? 13 said Aye, and 7 said Nay, and so the words were to be restored. On the question, shall the *Nicene Creed* be restored in the Liturgy? the same was unanimously agreed to. It appears very probable, though it is not clearly stated, that this restoration of the Nicene Creed was no more than a permission for the Minister to use either that *or* the Apostles' Creed. On the question, shall the Creed, commonly called the *Athanasian Creed*, be admitted in the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America? 17 said Nay, and 3 said Aye; and so it was determined that the Athanasian Creed shall not be admitted into the Liturgy of the Protestant Episcopalian Church in America. All the Deputies of the States of New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, said Nay; those of New Jersey and Dela-

Delaware were divided—if any alterations have been made in this matter since October, 1786, they have not come to my knowledge. On the supposition that none have been made, I beg the Reader to consider—whether the American Liturgy, which, in addition to many other important variations, has absolutely rejected the Creed of St. Athanasius, be in all *material* points the same as ours: if it be, we may presume that the Athanasian Creed is an *immaterial point*, and that those who think it so will forward its expulsion from the Liturgy of the Church of England.

With respect to the Doctrine of the Trinity as *explained* by Athanasius or any other *Man*, I cannot look upon it to be so fundamental in Religion as to think we should be *guilty of sin*, in consenting to revise, or even to change it. If in this I differ from some, I have others to support me; nay, I have the great principle of all the Protestant Churches in the world in my favour:
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for it is a principle with them all, to admit the fallibility of all *human* explications of Scripture: Every *human* explication then of the Trinity may be an erroneous explication; and what *may* be an *error*, can not be, and ought not to be imposed, as a fundamental Christian verity. *Episcopius, Curcellæus, Limborch*, as eminent divines as Christendom hath ever known, all maintained—that the belief of the Trinity, according to any human explication of the Doctrine, was not necessary to salvation—and many of our own Divines, in answering the objections of Free-thinkers, have maintained the same thing,—and, indeed, the Bishops of England, by permitting the Episcopalian Church in America to use or not to use the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds according to their discretion, may be thought to have given no obscure intimation, of their not believing the profession of these human explanations of the Trinity to be necessary

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to falvation. So that, I fincerely own, I cannot fee upon what principle of Reason or Religion, the revifal, even of the Doctrines of our Liturgy, can be objected to. To fay that what is eftablifhed is right, and fhall be maintained, is an imperious argument of authority; more befitting the mouth of the *Pope* at Rome, or of the *Mufti* at Conftantinople, than that of any Proteftant in Chriftendom. If we look back a few hundred years into our own hiftory, we fhall find our anceftors *then* believed; nay, if we do but crofs the channel, we fhall find millions of men *now* believing a Doctrine, and contending that it is founded on the fure word of God, which we think has no foundation whatever, either in Reason or Scripture—the Doctrine of Tranfubftantiation. And who will fay that our pofterity may not be as much aftonifhed at our having believed the Athanafian Doctrine of the Trinity, as we
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are astonished at our ancestors having believed the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, which the Romanists maintain to be as credible, and as firmly supported by Scripture, as *that* Doctrine of the Trinity is? My contending, or any person's contending—that it is impossible such a revolution of sentiment should ever take place in the breasts of Englishmen, is no better proof of such impossibility, than a Catholic Priest's contending, that it is impossible Frenchmen should ever disbelieve Transubstantiation, would be a proof that such an event would never take place; an event, which most Englishmen believe will take place soon.

Is it reasonable then, it may be urged; upon principles of impartial justice—that the Trinitarian worship of the *National Church* should be subverted, in order to make room for the Unitarian worship of *Mr. Lindsey's Chapel*—of *that shop in Essex Street, where*

men may go, and buy their Divinity?—

Men certainly pay, and properly pay, their instructors both in the National Church, and in Mr. Lindsey's Chapel : that consideration will not help to decide the question ; nor in considering it should we pay attention to the words *Church* and *Chapel*.—In answering it, I should certainly say—it is reasonable, if the Unitarian worship, adopted by Mr. Lindsey, be more conformable to Scripture than the Trinitarian worship followed by the Church of England.—But, who shall decide that point ? On the one hand, we have men of good morals, and of great learning, who object to our worship (God forbid ! that I should so far forget either my modesty, or my charity, as to say their objections are either *silly*, or *begotten in ignorance*, or *nursed by self-conceit*), affirming the Unitarian worship to be the only worship which is conformable to the whole tenor of the Old and New Testament.

Testament. On the other hand, we have men of morals as good, and of learning as great, who affirm that the Trinitarian worship is more conformable to Scripture than the Unitarian. Here, then, we have affirmation opposed to affirmation; but affirmation is not the measure of truth.—Will numbers help us to a conclusion? Must we say that the Trinitarian worship is more conformable to Scripture than the Unitarian, inasmuch as there are more Trinitarians than Unitarians in Christendom? No—Consent of numbers is not the criterion of true Doctrine; if it was, we must admit that the Roman Catholic is more pure than the Protestant Religion; that Mahomet's Religion is better founded than the Religion of Jesus; and Paganism than both of them. Numbers may by force put an end to contention, but they cannot produce conviction. What then is reasonable to be done? I am not accustomed

to conceal my sentiments on any subject, and I have no hesitation in delivering them on this; I have only to beg the Reader's excuse for the liberty I take in delivering any opinion on a point of such intricacy and delicacy; but my opinion is—that the Trinitarian worship should be continued in the Church at present; not on the ground of its being most conformable to Scripture (for who shall judge of that?), but on the ground of its being *now* believed to be so by the legislature of the kingdom; and that those who believe otherwise should have the most absolute liberty to worship God in their way, and to publish whatever interpretations of Scripture they should judge proper in support of their Doctrines. If, in the vicissitudes incident to all human opinions, the legislature of this country, which represents (really or not, is not now the question) the majority of the people, should be persuaded, that the

Unitarian

Unitarian form of worship was more conformable than the Trinitarian to the word of God, then it would be proper that the Unitarian worship should be the worship of the National Church; and that the Trinitarians should be allowed the same absolute liberty of worshipping in their way, and of publishing in support of their opinions, which I think is due, and ought now to be granted to the Unitarians. This, perhaps, is not the best possible thing which might be done, if a Church Constitution was to be formed *de novo*; but I think it is all that can in reason be demanded of a State, which has previously determined to establish only one Sect of Christians; the justice of such a determination I think might be proved; and the policy of it is ^{not} now the subject of inquiry.—Perhaps it will be thought that I take too much for granted, in saying, that the Trinitarian worship is *now* believed, by the Legisla-

ture, to be more conformable to Scripture than the Unitarian—but such is my opinion, and, in taking the liberty to declare it, I do not wish to press it upon other men as a fact. May I be permitted to mention another opinion—that was the question concerning the propriety of substituting Doctor Clarke's amended Liturgy, or one on that plan, in the place of our present Liturgy, *now* proposed, in order to have the decision of the Legislature upon it a twelve-month hence, so that all serious men might have time to consider the subject, my opinion is, that it would be decided for Dr. Clarke's amended Liturgy, or one on that plan.

I beg the Reader to remark, that the general excellency of our Liturgy is not here either denied or questioned; a review of it is the only thing contended for. A great many learned men, both in the last century and in this, have justly spoken of the Liturgy
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in terms of commendation ; and some have spoken of it in such an extravagant style of panegyrick, as can not with propriety, I had almost said, as can not without impiety be applied to any human composition. Notwithstanding this, I know of no period of Church History, from the beginning of the Reformation to the present time, in which objections of weight have not been made to various parts of it by men of probity and competent knowledge of the subject, and more particularly since the last establishment of the Liturgy in 1661. There have frequently arisen, (not Puritans or Dissenters of any kind), but men nursed up in the bosom of the Church, who have not scrupled to maintain, that a revival both of the worship and doctrines of the Liturgy, and of the Articles of Religion, would tend to the ease of men's consciences, to the furtherance of piety and good morals, to the reputation of
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the Church, and the purity of Religion. To speak of such men as of prodigies in the moral world who are to be noticed for their singularity rather than revered for their integrity, to represent them as anomalous and eccentric characters, to charge them with being enemies to all Establishments, or to that of the Church of England, as being destitute of justice and honour in endeavouring to amend an Establishment, which they receive wages for defending—what is all this? It is *loving darkness rather than light*, it is damping the spirit of inquiry, it is conducting controversy in a manner, neither calculated to increase the moderation of the Church, or to promote the investigation of truth.

But you will say, that Clergymen, who in the progress of their Ministry become dissatisfied with any part of the Ritual and Doctrines of the Church, ought to resign their preferments and retire

retire from the Ministry—and do you, whose lot it may be to live in luxury and draw thousands from the Church, do you, in the violence of your moral virtue, in the intemperance of your religious zeal, in the over-orthodoxy of your faith, do you call upon a poor Clergyman, who in the humility of his soul dares not say “by his authority committed to me I absolve thee from all thy Sins,” or who, in the weakness of his intellect, can not understand the meaning of the terms, in which the Athanasian Doctrine of the Trinity is expressed, or, in the charity of his heart, scruples denouncing damnation on his brethren, do you call upon such a man to give up his preferments, to retire from the Ministry, and to starve? If there is a Bishop on the Bench who would do this, I should be proud to say, God forgive the boast! that, was I a Bishop, my soul was not at unison with his.

But if one man may omit this part of the Liturgy because he dislikes it, another may omit that, and thus, by giving way to the scruples of individuals, nothing will be left.—It will be time enough to answer this objection, when the omissions shall become so numerous as that the essentials of worship are not left; or so offensive to Christian Congregations, as to endanger the public peace. I allow the utility of an established Liturgy; I allow the propriety of requiring from Ministers a consent to the use of it; and I think that no man should enter into the Church, who is of opinion that there is any thing in the Liturgy, which he can not with a safe conscience use; but I plead for indulgence to those whose sentiments on some points may become changed; even Doctor Clarke, who, in the first edition of his incomparable book on the Trinity, allowed that “by analogy the Holy Spirit may
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also be desired to convey such gifts as it is his peculiar office to distribute to the Church," seems to have changed his mind on that important point, as the passage is left out in all the subsequent editions of that work. Though a friend to uniformity, I am not such a rigid friend to it, as to think that slender deviations from it should be harshly interpreted; strictly speaking, every Bishop would have right on his side in executing ecclesiastical vengeance against such Clergymen, in his diocese, as omitted the use of the Athanasian Creed; but none, I hope, would either hunt after an occasion for exercising this *Summum jus*, or be happy in its being presented to him by others: all of them, I trust, would agree with Bishop Taylor in saying, "that there is no stumbling-block more troublesome or dangerous, than a severe, literal, and rigorous exacting of laws in all cases."—And this puts me in
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mind of adding a word on the utility of revising, at stated periods, constitutions of all kinds, civil or ecclesiastical.

“ That our Liturgy and Articles of Religion should, from time to time, pass under a formal examination, even if nothing should be found alterable therein,” has been very wisely said by the Author of the “ Hints ;” for it would be a satisfaction to find that nothing wanted alteration : or, as would generally be the case, it would be a comfort to good men to know, that what did want alteration was in the way of being reformed. The very principle recommended by this Author doth in fact make a part of the Constitution of some of the States in America ; and in particular of the State of Pennsylvania. In the 47th Section of the Plan of Government of that State, a *Council of Censors* is established, which is to be appointed every seventh year, and to continue in authority one year.

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The duty of this Council is, not only to inquire whether "the Constitution has been preserved inviolate, but to propose the amendment of any article of the Constitution which may be defective, and to add such as are necessary for the preservation of the rights and happiness of the people."

It is time to draw towards a conclusion. What is it then, it may be said, that you wish to have done? You have already admitted, that you think the majority of the Legislature are Trinitarians, and that the National Religion ought to be the Religion of the majority, and consequently that no change ought to take place.—Softly, good Sirs, permit me to draw my own consequences, and to state my own opinions. And the most leading feature of my humble opinion is; that every obstruction to a free and impartial examination of the word of God should be removed from the minds of all men,

men, and especially from the minds of the Clergy. They are now bound to subscribe articles of Religion, and to declare that every thing contained in the Book of Common-Prayer is agreeable to the word of God, at an age when, it may reasonably be presumed, few of them have an accurate knowledge of what the word of God is, in many important points. A prejudice in favour of particular Doctrines is, by these means, unwarily planted in their minds, it grows with their growth, it choaks that freedom of understanding which can alone produce truth, and overpowers in a thousand instances their utmost endeavours to root it out. And when it is further considered, that the religious opinions, which were thus at first imbibed, are through life strengthened by a prospect of emolument held out to those who adhere to them; and that a profession of other opinions is attended with danger to a man's fortunes,

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and with disgrace to his reputation, I can not see how it can properly be expected that any, except a few *anomalous and eccentric characters*, should have courage to examine the ground on which their faith is built. "Men," says Mr. Locke, "are fond of certain tenets upon no other evidence but respect and custom, and think they must maintain them, or all is gone; though they have never examined the ground they stand on, nor have ever made them out to themselves, or can make them out to others. We should contend earnestly for the truth, but we should first be sure that it is truth, or else we fight against God, who is the God of truth, and do the work of the Devil, who is the father and propagater of lies; and our zeal, though never so warm, will not excuse us; for this is only prejudice." An absolute indifferency as to the truth or falsehood of religious opinions, is the only basis on which men

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should ground all their inquiries into the meaning of the word of God. So far am I from thinking it to be the duty of a Christian Magistrate, to influence men's judgements with respect to religious Doctrines, by rewards and punishments, that I conceive it to be quite the contrary ; I conceive it to be his duty to leave men's judgements as free and uninfluenced as he possibly can, consistently with the safety of that Religious Establishment, which, for the common good, he hath thought fit to introduce and to support. It is an obstruction to truth for a Magistrate to profess his attachment to any particular sect in Religion ; because the authority and reverence annexed to his *Civil* station extend themselves to his *religious* persuasion ; and men are induced to embrace Doctrines, not from a conviction that they are true, but from a certainty that they are believed to be so by the Magistrate, and from a

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confused notion of the infallibility of his judgement. This evil, unavoidably incident to the situation of every Magistrate who supports any one denomination of Christians by an exclusive patronage, should be kept within as confined bounds as the nature of it will admit. He should not be so narrow-minded as to imagine the common good to be so inseparably connected with his religious belief, as that he ought to discourage the free discussion of all other religious opinions; he should not be so bigoted as to suppose himself possessed of any degree of infallibility, but modestly to admit that other men may be as honest and wise as himself; he ought in no manner to obstruct, but to give a free current to the sentiments of others; and whenever the tide of opinion should change, instead of resisting it by his authority, he ought to suffer himself to be carried away by it. Had the Civil Magistrate,

in the different states of Christendom since the age of Constantine, acted upon such an enlarged plan of moderation and free inquiry, I am as much convinced as I can be of any thing so incapable of proof, that either an unity of opinion in Doctrine and Worship would long ago have taken place amongst Christians, or that persecution at least, of every kind and degree, would have been utterly abolished from the constitutions of all civil governments, and its spirit extinguished in the hearts of individuals. If then I might be permitted to hint what appears to me proper to be done, I should say—That a commission should be issued, empowering an equal number of Laymen and Churchmen to revise the Liturgy; and to propose to the consideration of Parliament such alterations in it as they should think fit; having respect in the execution of their office to what was done by the Commissioners in 1689,

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to what has since been offered from the press in various publications, and to what has been adopted in the Liturgy of the Episcopalian Church in America. —That subscription to the 39 Articles of Religion, and to the 2d and 3d Articles of the 36th Canon, and the declaration of assent and consent to the book of Common Prayer, should be laid aside wholly, unless it should be thought fit to preserve the subscription to articles made against Popery. —That every person when he is ordained, or instituted to a benefice, shall make and subscribe the following declaration, or one to the same sense:—I believe, the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and to contain all things necessary to Salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the Liturgy of the Church of England, as it is now by law established. —It becomes not an individual, who has hopes of seeing a business undertaken

by proper authority, to be forward in anticipating public wisdom, by obtruding his sentiments upon it; nor would I have ventured to mention mine, but to obviate the censure, usually thrown upon Reformers, of dealing in generals.

By some such plan of alteration as is here proposed, neither the constitution or government of the Established Church would be at all changed; we should have the same conformity to the use of a Liturgy which we have at present, and as little diversity of Doctrine as ought to be desired. Theology would no longer be narrowed "by corruption into a trade or faction, for mean or ill ends, and secular interests." The prejudice arising from the influence of custom, from the authority of party, from the hope of emolument, or the fear of censure, being done away, men would study the Doctrines delivered by the Sacred Writers with the same impartiality as they do the Doctrines

trines of Newton or Hippocrates. The great question in debate at present amongst us respects the person of Christ; he, who has any wish for its being decided one way rather than another, is not in a state of mind for the examining which way it ought to be decided. To think rightly in Religion, is a matter of infinitely more importance to every man, than to be zealous in *supporting* or in *subverting* established Doctrines. If any man, from the openness with which I express my sentiments, shall accuse me of being attached to the principles of the Unitarians, or of being inimical to the constitution of the Church of England, I shall never condescend to give any other answer to his calumny than what I now give; and I plainly tell him, that he does me wrong. I am attached to the word of God, and I am an enemy to whatever obstructs men in their endeavours to understand it; and if I think

that subscription to human articles of faith is a mean of such obstruction, I am neither singular in my opinion; nor, if I was singular, could I, on that account, change it.

As to a new translation of the Bible, or, which amounts to much the same thing, a proper amendment of the old one; it has of late become a sort of fashion to discourage the idea of attempting it. I must, however, profess, that I see much utility, and no danger whatever in the design. A single sermon would explain to the most illiterate congregation of Christians in the kingdom the necessity for undertaking, and the advantage which would attend, the execution of the work. Men of every condition would be no more startled or scandalized at hearing read in the Church a new translation of the Lessons, than they were at hearing read a new translation of the Epistles and Gospels on the last revival of the Liturgy;
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when the Epistles and Gospels were taken out of our present translation of the Bible, they being read before according to the old. The helps towards a due accomplishment of this work are numerous ; for, not to speak particularly of Lowth, Newcome, Blaney, and others, every commentator, either in our own or in other countries, who has written upon the whole, or on any part of the Bible, since it was last translated into English, might be consulted with advantage : for there are few of them who do not shew many instances in which the meaning of particular words, or the sense of whole passages, have been mistaken, or obscured by former translators. It may not be improper, however, to wait till some works which are now announced to the public, or are speedily expected to be so, are completed.—Dr. Geddes's work (I wish it may meet with due encouragement) will no doubt afford
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great assistance, whenever a new translation of the Bible for public use shall be undertaken.—Dr. *Symonds's* “Critical Observations on our present Version of the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles” will be found highly useful. This gentleman, not more eminent for his great learning than for his benevolence and probity, has with much industry and accuracy compared our translation with the most celebrated modern translations, and shewn, by the comparison, its excellencies and defects: he has moreover pointed out, with great skill, many grammatical errors in our present translation. Our Bible has been said to be the standard of the English Language; whoever wishes to read his Bible freed from obscurity and ambiguity of construction, or to see the standard of our language rendered grammatically correct, will join with me in wishing, that this gentleman will compleat his plan by giving us “his

Remarks

Remarks on the Epistles."—An important work, "A Translation of the New Testament, with Notes justifying the deviation from the present Translation," is said to be expected from Mr. *Wakefield*. I forbear speaking of the classical knowledge, and the critical *Acumen*, of this gentleman; they are known to every scholar at home and abroad. The giving this intimation of his design, I thought would be acceptable to the public; and I am happy in doing this justice to the character of a man, whose person I neither know, or ever saw.

In taking leave now, and perhaps for ever, of my Reader, I cannot refrain from expressing my satisfaction at the glorious prospect of the prevalence of general freedom, and general happiness, which is opening to our view in every part of Europe. The principles of Civil and Religious Liberty are beginning to be every where understood,

derstood, in the same enlarged manner in which they have long been understood by ourselves. The despotism which yet subsists in Europe will soon be every where changed into lawful rule, and right supremacy. Princes will no longer put their trust in standing armies, but in the affections of their people. Tyrants will become kings. Other nations will acquire the liberty; will then emulate the loyalty; and ultimately enjoy the happiness of the people of Britain. The writings of the Remonstrants in Holland, and of Mr. *Locke* in England, have established the natural justice, and the political utility, of religious toleration, not only in those countries, but in all other parts of Europe and America, where they have been properly studied, on the immutable foundation of truth. The Fiend of persecution, which for so many ages, in a thousand hideous forms, frightened and tormented the
Church

Church of Christ, is at length subdued by *the brightness of his coming*; the true spirit of his Religion is at length coming into the hearts of all men; and when it shall have taken full possession, when it shall have wholly driven out the spirit of *Antichrist*, men will either agree in religious opinions, or they will cease not only from punishing, but from disliking one another, on account of their disagreement. It is true, our statute-book still continues to be blackened by the existence of penal laws established against sectaries; but it is as true, that the hearts of most men, on both sides of the *Tweed*, revolt at the idea of putting them in force. There may be a remnant of bigotry and intolerance in a few churchmen; there may be a little of the four *leven* of non-conformity in a few sectaries; but both of them are kept from doing mischief to mankind, by the general persuasion—that
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every one who keeps the peace is answerable in concerns of Religion to God, and not to man:—a future and no very distant day will remove from both sides the remaining obstructions to a *comprehension*. One side will think that it does not become their enlarged minds to separate from their brethren in Christ, on account of a few indifferent ceremonies, or of some particularities in the constitution and government of the Church, in themselves not essential parts of a Christian's faith or worship; and the other, with equal liberality, will see reason to relinquish their suspicions, to abandon their jealousies, to be ashamed of the prejudices of their ancestors, and to rejoice in restoring their brethren in society to the rights of citizens.—It utterly exceeds my sagacity to account for the origin of that religious bigotry which has, at different times, disgraced every denomination of Christians. I can see a
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reason, why a man should contend with zeal against Atheists and Deists (though he should not lay aside either his charity or good manners in contending even with them); and the reason is a reason of weight; for an admission of their principles would rob him of his strongest, in my opinion (notwithstanding all that has ever been written on the nature of the soul) would rob him of his only hope of immortality,—the truth of the Christian Religion. But why *Episcopalians* and *Presbyterians* should be angry with each other for not following the same form of Church government—why *Calvinists* and *Arminians* should devour one another for not thinking alike on the *five points*—why *Athanasians* and *Unitarians* should calumniate one another for not agreeing as to the *quantum* of honour which is to be given to Jesus Christ, when they both agree in believing, that he is indeed the Christ,

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the Saviour of the world—all this quite exceeds my ability to account for; I should think it an incredible perversion of understanding, if experience did not shew that it was a fact.

I have now submitted to the public, with great plainness and sincerity, my sentiments on an important subject; and I hope I have done it in a manner which will offend none. All arguments *ad invidiam, ad odium, ad ridiculum*; all *flings*, and *girds*, and *strokes*; all the petty artillery of Theological controversy, as neither suited to serious minds, or serious subjects, I have disdained to use. As to the sentiments themselves, I can not expect that they will be agreeable to all; and they may probably experience the public censures of some. If this should be the case, it may be proper in me (lest my future silence should be misconstrued into a change of sentiment) now to declare,—that I do not mean to write any more
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on this subject.—The considerations, if they are proper, will not stand in need of my support; and, if they are improper, I do not wish that they should either have my support, or that of any other man. I conclude in the words of the ever memorable *Hales*, of *Eton*: “It hath been the common disease of Christians, from the beginning, not to content themselves with that measure of Faith which God and Scriptures have expressly afforded us; but, out of a vain desire to know more than is revealed, they have attempted to discuss things of which we can have no light neither from reason or Revelation; neither have they rested here, but, upon pretence of Church authority, which is none; or tradition, which for the most part is but figment; they have peremptorily concluded, and confidently imposed upon others, a necessity of entertaining conclusions of that nature.—Were Liturgies and public
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forms of service so framèd, as that they admitted not of particular and private fancies, but contained only such things as in which all Christians do agree, Schisms on opinion were utterly vanisht. *For consider of all the Liturgies that are, or ever have been, and remove from them whatsoever is scandalous to any party, and leave nothing but what all agree on, and the event shall be, that the public service and honour of God shall no ways suffer."*

F I N I S



